

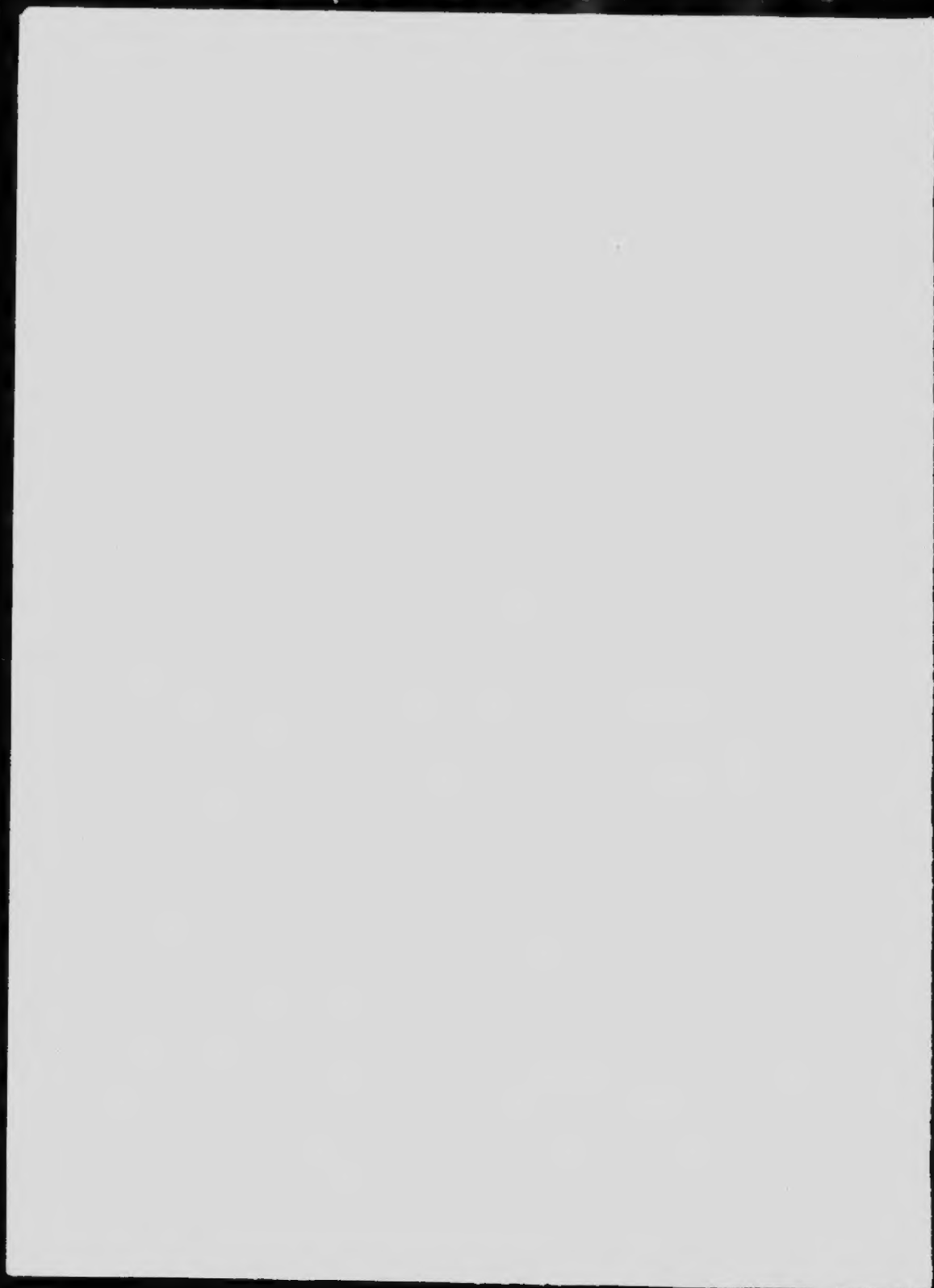
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## **The necessity of the compulsory inspection of hides.**

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There is scarcely any class of raw material which is more open to fraudulent dealing, than green or raw hides. The frauds committed in this trade bear on the quality and especially on the weight of the goods. To alter or increase the weight, sand, water and other substances of similar character are added to the salt and by this means it is easy to run up the merchantable weight of the hides as much as 10 to 15 per cent besides having the effect to injure the nature of the hides. The proportion of fecal matter, left on the hides, may also materially increase their weight. In fact, the means are many by which the weight of hides can be and is, in practice, altered.

The object of the inspection is to prevent these frauds, but, as actually carried out, it is defective and permits a state of things to exist, which is simply ruinous to the tanners. The inspectors are practically at the mercy of the butchers and this explains why the inspection weight, compared with the real or merchantable weight, varies, so to speak, with each locality. Why should not the tanner also have the right to have a law for his protection

*after 2 Dec 1902*

since he runs the most risk, there being as many different modes of inspecting and weighing the hides as there are inspection offices or sellers in this class of material ?

For instance, in one locality, an inspector makes 100 lbs. of hides out of 75 to 80 lbs. ; in another, he makes 100 lbs. out of 80 to 85 lbs. and in a third, he makes 100 lbs. out of 85 to 90 lbs of utilizable or merchantable hides. This system causes to the tanner a loss of 5 to 25 per cent on the weight of the skins, that is to say, instead of helping and protecting him, which is the aim of the law, the optional inspection as it is at present is in many cases a source of loss to the tanner.

At Quebec, here is what occurs :

The Quebec market contributes about 400 hides a week or about one tenth of the quantity used by the Quebec tanneries which is from 4000 to 5000 hides. The local tanners are therefore obliged to obtain the other nine-tenths from other parts of Canada and it is in the purchase of these nine-tenths that arise the difficulties of which none can form an idea but those acquainted with the way things are carried out in practice.

Rich or poor, the Quebec tanner, who buys

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hides outside of the province, is compelled to pay in advance or before delivery; the hides are consigned to the bank, Bill of Lading attached, so that the goods have been already fully paid for, when the purchaser is permitted to examine them and to ascertain whether he has received the quantity and quality for which he has paid his money.

And here is what happens in nine cases out of ten.

The purchaser finds that the hides have been badly weighed so as to make him pay for 125 lbs. instead of 100 lbs., utilizable or merchantable; that they have been badly classified; and that they are in bad condition. The tanner discovers that on a carload of hides costing \$3 000 he has paid from \$500 to \$600 too much owing to bad weighing and bad inspection.

In what position is he then placed?

He must either accept the hides as they are and submit to this loss of 15 to 20 per cent or refuse them.

In the latter alternative, what is his position?

If he refuses the hides, of which he stands in absolute need in order to keep his establishment

going, very often to execute a contract, he will all the same have to pay the wages of his help without having any work for them to do and he will disappoint a buyer, whose custom he may desire to preserve.

But it may be said that, in such a case, the tanner has his recourse for indemnity against the dealer who sold him the hides.

In theory, this is true, but, in reality, it is impracticable. If he makes a claim upon the dealer, the latter simply replies that the hides were inspected by inspectors appointed by the Government ; that he himself bought the hides on the strength of official certificates of inspection and that if those certificates be false or incorrect, it is the inspectors who are to blame and who should be held to account.

As it sometimes happens that the hides come from several different places and have passed through the hands of several inspection offices, in order to ascertain the claim to be made against each of the inspectors concerned and to establish the claim of damages against each, all the hides must be examined one by one, which is practically impossible, especially in winter, when the hides are frozen. But when the tanner has done

all this and present his claims to the inspectors at fault, coupled with a demand for the payment of the damages sustained, the inspectors unvariably refuse to pay on the ground that the hides were properly weighed and inspected. In the face of this refusal, the only means left to the tanner of obtaining justice is to apply to the law-courts, but the litigation may last six months, twelve months, or even more when there is an appeal and, during all this time the hides at issue lie idle, subject to accidents and the fluctuations of prices. If during the interval the market declines from 4 to 5 cents per lb., which is of frequent enough occurrence, the tanner stands to lose from \$800 to \$1000 on a car-load without having any recourse to recoup himself for this loss. In all frankness, we ask—is such a state of things tolerable?

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## The Root of the Evil.

The root of the evil lies in the fact that the inspection is optional, that is to say, that the butchers are left free to have their hides inspected

or not, whichever they please. Under the actual system, the inspectors have no fixed salaries, but are paid so much per hide for their services by those who bring the hides to them for inspection. This system places the inspectors at the mercy of the butchers, who can starve them out, by getting no inspection done when it is not done to suit them and as they please. In other words, the system of optional inspection places the inspector in the alternative of choosing between his duty and his personal interest in order to avoid being reduced to famine and he is driven to submit to the whims and the dictation of the butchers, who take advantage of this abnormal situation to force on the tanners any quality and weight they please.

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### **Way to remedy the evil.**

The way to remedy the evil is to make the inspection compulsory and to render the inspectors absolutely independent of the butchers and sellers of hides. To obtain uniformity in the inspection, the latter must necessarily be compulsory. As it was so during a great many years, an opportunity was afforded us at that time of



ascertaining that the inspections were conducted uniformly and gave satisfaction to all interested in hides and the trade in general and that since it has been made optional a host of inconveniences and annoyances have arisen.

Under such a system, the local inspectors might be effectively controlled by the Inspector general, who would lay down uniform rules for there government and take the necessary measures to verify and survey the work of each and to give justice to all concerned.

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### **Objections to compulsory inspection.**

The principal objection to compulsory inspection is that it would create an obstacle to the freedom of trade.

The only reason why we ask that the inspection be made compulsory is in order to succeed in establishing a system that will render the inspectors independent and that will give to buyers the formal guarantee that the certificate of inspection represents each hide as it exactly is, both as regards weight and quality.

Now, how is this an obstruction to the freedom of honest trade? Will honest trade be obstructed because the butchers and hide-sellers will no longer, be able to take advantage of the defectiveness of the present system, to make the tanners pay for 100 lbs. of hides, when they only get 75 to 80 lbs. real weight? Fraud will be obstructed and rendered impossible, but not honest trade, which is the only one that merits the protection and the encouragement of the Government and Parliament.

If their motives are honest, what objection can hide-sellers have to the establishment of a system of inspection which will assure to everyone his due? What impediment can such a system be to honest and regular trade?

Why should butchers and sellers of hides be excepted from the regime of inspection to which farmers and certain classes of traders are forced to submit in other classes of material and products?

The inspection of certain articles of commerce, which are more susceptible than others of inviting fraud in quality and quantity is a recognized principle of our legislation.

Are not sawn lumber, square timber, potash grain, flour, fish and oils, to mention only a few

of the best known cases—subjected by law to a system of inspection which prevents fraud, facilitates commercial operations, and gives to the purchaser a formal guarantee ?

Why should it not be the same with hides ?

What reasons can the butchers have to oppose the inspection, if they honestly want to be paid for what they deliver to the buyers of hides ?

The law compels the farmer to deliver 55 lbs of good clean wheat, in sound condition, for a bushel of No 1 wheat. Nobody complains that this interferes with the freedom of trade

As every one knows, an export trade is rendered possible only by the inspection, which furnishes to the buyer the guarantee upon which he bases his operations.—Why then should the butcher object to being placed on the same footing with the farmer, who belongs to quite as honest and as respectable a class as that of the butchers and the sellers of hides ?

In the timber trade, the lumber is sold according to specification or on the certificates of cullers and inspectors appointed by the Government. Does this obstruct the freedom of trade ? On the contrary, the trade is helped by the ins-

pection, which stimulates and facilitates, instead of restraining it.

What serious objections can the butchers and sellers of hides possibly have to submit to a similar regime ?

The other objections to compulsory inspection are only matters of no importance. It is objected :

1. That the inspection of calf-skins is impossible during the great heats of summer ;

2. That, as proposed, it would not apply to all the towns in Canada.

3. That it is impossible to stamp all the hides so as to identify the offices where they were inspected.

4. That there is no inspection of hides in the United-States.

As far as calf-skins are concerned, considering that they are generally clean, we do not see that there is so much necessity for inspection ; what we ask regards the skin of 15 lbs. and upwards.

As regards the obligation of having hides inspected, nothing stand in the way of its application to all towns ; in fact, this is what the

tanners desire ; the inspection might even become compulsory in the towns and villages, which turn out some 200 hides and upwards per week.

As for the stamping of the hides, we can perceive nothing but bad faith on the part of the opponents of this system, as it is well recognized that the stamping of the hides with the initials of the inspectors is already practised to the satisfaction of the trade and this ever since the inspection has existed.

The contention that the inspection of hides is not required in the United States is easily explained. Cattle-raising is not conducted in the same way with our neighbors as in Canada. In the United States they are not like us obliged to keep their cattle-stabled during six or seven months in the year. For this reason, Cattle are clean at the moment of slaughtering. The result of this is that, in order to get the real weight of the hides, it is not necessary to strike off 10 and even 20 lbs, as it often happens here. The American hides are always free from those impurities, and yet, notwithstanding all this, our neighbors employ expert men, who make a strict inspection of each hide, at the time

of sale and whose duty it is also to weigh and classify them, to establish the reduction, whenever hides are found in unfit condition. The same applies to other countries, England among others, (by following their example we have nothing to lose).

December 2nd, 1902. "The Liverpool Market Hides" adopted the following resolutions :

That the official inspector of the Government do himself inspect each hide and personally stamp it.

That all hides inspected by the official inspector be accepted as final.

That, in order to secure a better class of hides for this market and to encourage the butchers to do the skinning with the greatest possible care, the following brands be stamped :

Extra-Flayed.

Ordinary.

Seconds.

Since then, a great improvement in the value of the hides in their respective classes has been noted.

As will be seen, there is no serious objection

to compulsory inspection, while the arguments in its favor are innumerable.

For example, take the cities of Montreal and Toronto, which are the two largest producers of hides in the Dominion, although the inspection is optional, the butchers nevertheless get all their hides inspected and the President of the Montreal Butchers Association, stated in 1900 in the presence of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Sir Henri Joly de Lotbinière, that they made more money out of their hides, as the inspection was well done and for this reason commanded the highest price in the whole Dominion.



### Importance of the Interests at Stake.

The tannery and leather industry is one of the most important in Canada. The census of 1891 supplies the following information on the subject.

	Cost of Wages	Raw material	Value of Products
Tanneries—	\$1,523,353	\$10,316,818	\$15,144,535
Shoe making	4,382,584	9,786,745	17,895,903
Saddlery	771,688	1,662,361	3,233,973
Trunks	127,127	314,137	667,887
Belting	10,060	87,583	116,961
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	\$6,814,812	\$22,157,654	\$37,069,259

Apart from the forest industry, there is hardly any other which show such large figures.

In the \$10,316,818 of raw material used in tannery, the value of the hides represents 80 per cent or \$8,245,454. Putting every thing down to the lowest figure, the absence or defectiveness of the inspection is calculated to causes a loss to the tanners of 10 per cent or \$824,545 a year on the purchase of hides.

Have not the sufferers of this enormous loss



reason to complain and to ask the Government to consider the means that should be taken to improve a situation altogether so discouraging? Are they not justified in demanding that 100 lbs. be delivered to them when they pay for 100 lbs.

Within some years, especially at Quebec, which is the chief centre of the industry, the tannery business has experienced vicissitudes, which have caused the downfall of a number of establishments. The cost of labor has increased. The price of hemlock bark has, so to speak, doubled and is still constantly rising owing to the scarcity of the article and its exportation to the United States. To day, the bark must be brought from relatively considerable distances and the day is not far off when the little that remains, on the St-Maurice, will be exhausted. It will be necessary then to fall back upon the Ottawa and Lake Nipissing regions, where the Quebec tanners will be confronted with the competition of the American traders who import from Canada all the bark that is produced, in order to feed a rival industry in the United States. Owing to the other advantages which they enjoy and to the use of the bark which they get from Canada, the New England tanners are in a position to cause the severest competition to the Canadian tanners even

on the Canadian market. Very little is needed to render this competition insupportable and to ruin the tannery industry in Canada.

Is it not important in the general interest of the country to overlook nothing that will prevent such a result?

These considerations are not urged for reclamation purposes, but exclusively and solely to show that if we, as tanners, ask for protection in regard to the inspection of hides, we do not do so through caprice or inordinate greed, but simply to save our industry from disaster or consequences tending to seriously jeopardize it; we have no desire to injure any one; nor do we covet the belongings of others; we only crave a simple act of justice that will put us in the position of being required to pay only for what we get.



